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Graffiti: Artistic Expression or Vandalism?

While there are valid points made on each end of the question, two constants remain: graffiti is unlawful and its removal is an expensive process. Removing graffiti requires more man hours, equipment and materials than simply removing a sign or banner from an overpass fence.

In 2012, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Metro Region spent more than \$500,000 on graffiti removal. More than \$150,000 was spent alone on I-94 in the city of Detroit. For what it costs to remove graffiti from Metro Detroit freeways, crews could resurface more than 6 miles on one lane of an asphalt roadway.

Graffiti "artists" work under the cloak of darkness, making them difficult to apprehend. And as you can see, these personal expressions are not only costly but incredibly dangerous. Taggers navigate their way onto bridge beams, climb large truss signs over live traffic, or scale down steep slopes to spray a name or a symbol. And while most tagging is non-offensive in nature, it's still unlawful. Besides, in order for crews to safely remove graffiti, lanes of traffic must be closed - hindering commerce and requiring unnecessary delays for the motoring public.

Crews who work to remove graffiti from freeways are often disappointed when taggers return hours later to re-tag the same location. So we ask that if you see taggers spraying graffiti on bridges and overpasses that you alert authorities. It's no secret that funding is already tight, and we can all agree that any available money should be going to making structures safe, not removing graffiti.

What do you think? E-mail us at mosir@michigan.gov.

Rob Morosi
MDOT Metro Region Communications Specialist

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News

Vandals hack road sign in Dearborn, put up racial slur about Trayvon Martin

Monday, April 9, 2012

By Dave Herndon

Twitter: @NHDaveH

DEARBORN — Early Monday morning a portable road sign that normally informs motorists about construction back-ups was hacked and a racial slur was posted on it.

The sign, which is a portable electronic message board, has been on westbound I-94 near Michigan Avenue for a large construction project in Dearborn near the I-94 interchange.

The message contained a reference to Trayvon Martin, the 17-year-old African-American who was shot and killed by a neighborhood watch volunteer in Sanford, Fla., Feb. 26.

According to a Rob Morosi, a spokesperson with the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Michigan State Police began receiving calls about the sign about 1 a.m.

"We were first made aware of it about 1 a.m. and got a crew out to fix it as fast as possible," said Morosi.

By 2 a.m. the subcontractor that owns the sign was contacted and the problem was repaired. According to Morosi the hacker was able to access the sign by breaking off a lock to gain access to a control panel.

This is not the first time that portable signs have been hacked into, but it is the first time that Morosi can remember the message being detrimental.

"It's rare that something like this happens, but in the past it's been things like around Halloween saying 'ghosts ahead' or things like that," Morosi said.

Morosi confirmed that a full investigation is underway by the state police.

"The sign has been moved to a state police post and is already under investigation," he said. "I hope they catch this person quickly."

Possible charges faced by whoever did this include, breaking and entering, theft and vandalism.

"We'll do everything we can to assist in the investigation," said Morosi. "It's sickening."

Contact Staff Writer Dave Herndon at 1-734-246-0842 or dherndon@heritage.com. Follow him on Facebook and @NHDaveH on Twitter.

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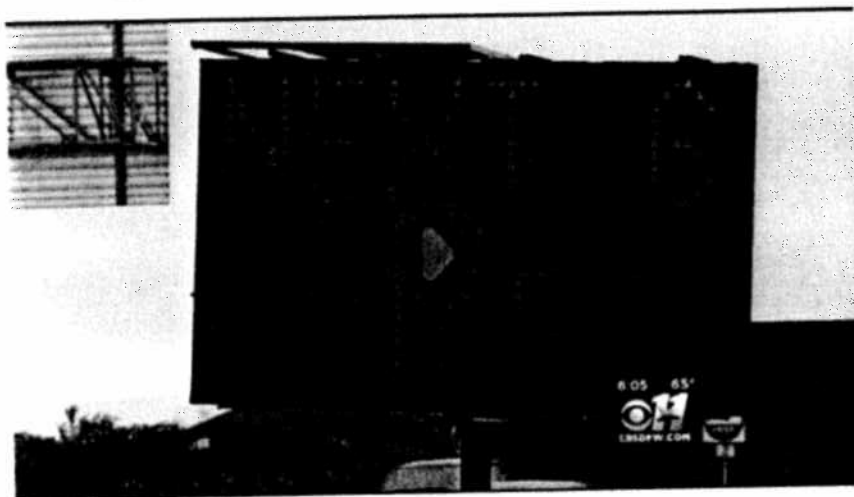
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DALLAS (CBSDFW.COM) - Someone is vandalizing important electronic signs in some construction zones north of Dallas. The portable electronic signs like these are more than informational to drivers; they help save lives, especially at night. But the batteries that run them are tempting targets.

From programmable digital message boards to simple arrow directional signs and bulldozers: batteries are essential to spark them into life. "They're special batteries," Capt. Kyle Babcock of the Melissa Police Department told CBS 11 News. "It's like a much larger car battery that operates those signs, the signs for directing motorists as well as earth moving equipment."

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Graffiti artists targeting Detroit area freeway signs

BY: Ronnie Dahl

POSTED: 3:40 PM, Sep 11, 2013

UPDATED: 8:47 PM, Sep 11, 2013

DETROIT (WXYZ) - Graffiti artists have moved from tagging Detroit's buildings, to tagging the state's highway signs.

Their work can be spotted all along the Detroit corridor. From I-94, to I-75, even the Lodge Freeway, sign after sign, marked with the letters EHC or the word "Head."

7 Action News has learned replacing the vandalized signs falls to the taxpayer.

The Michigan Department of Transportation routinely inspects the signs. If the vandalism compromises the message of the sign, it will be replaced.

Otherwise, crews will try to clean and or repair the tagged signs.

The Michigan Department of Transportation requests anyone that sees someone tagging the road signs report it to police.

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Police seeking suspects who vandalized vehicle, road signs in Wakeshma Township

Alex Mitchell | amitch5@mlive.com By Alex Mitchell | amitch5@mlive.com

on October 05, 2014 at 10:55 AM

WAKESHMA TOWNSHIP, MI — Kalamazoo County Sheriff's deputies are seeking suspects who vandalized a vehicle and multiple traffic signs overnight in Wakeshma Township, according to a press release from the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office.



MLive.com File
Photo

Deputies originally responded to the 13000 block of South 36th Street Sunday morning on a damaged vehicle complaint.

Officers observed that unknown suspects spray painted the vehicle and caused heavy damage to its body, with the total cost of the damage estimated to be several thousand dollars, the release stated.

Deputies said the suspects also spray painted several road signs in the area.

Anyone with information related to this investigation is asked to call the sheriff's office at 269-383-8748.

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Teens caught for sign vandalism in Goodrich

Tameka Duncan info@viewnewspapers.net

By Tameka Duncan
VIEW Contributor

GOODRICH — Two teens have been apprehended and charged with malicious destruction of property for the vandalism of road signs in the Village of Goodrich.

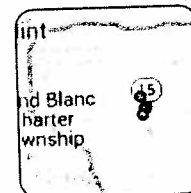
The 16-year-olds, who referred to themselves as the Goodrich Vandal Squad on their Myspace page, posted a photo of a vandalized sign on the website. The duo will have to reimburse the village \$400 for the cost of replacing and repairing the signs. A total of twelve signs were vandalized.

Signs in Goodrich have been an ongoing target for vandals since early summer and vandals struck again in late August by defacing signs on Dutch Road.

Ethan Campbell, supervisor for the Department of Public Works, said the vandalism began early in the summer with signs on Ridge Road and Janaroy Court. Later on, the vandals, who tagged the signs with GVS, used silver spray paint to mark stores.

Vandalism that occurred in late August consisted of four vandalized signs, including a stop sign and a new "children crossing" sign. The two other signs were a Village of Goodrich limits sign, which had the "Good" crossed out and replaced with "Hood" and a No Parking sign that had a swastika spray-painted on it, said Campbell. — *Natalie Blythe also contributed*

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